

# Reports on Soviet Space Failures Follow End of U. S. Official Disputes

By Robert S. Boyd  
Chicago Daily News Service

The sudden U. S. decision to publicize Russian space failures climaxes a long, behind-the-scenes strategy argument inside the Government.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration announced Wednesday night that Russia struck out on five attempts to reach the planets in the last two years. The sixth try was only a partial success.

Some officials in the space agency, the State Department and the U. S. Information Agency have been urging all along that the world be told about Russian failures as well as successes.

Military men and the Central Intelligence Agency had vetoed the idea, however, on the grounds that it would give away their secret sources of information.

## Put to Security Council

Their view — that security considerations outweighed possible propaganda benefits — had been Government policy until now.

The decision to break the truth loose was apparently ratified at a meeting of the National Security Council Wednesday.

The announcement came in the form of a letter from space agency director James Webb, replying to a request for information from the chairmen of the Senate and House Space Committees.

But this was only a smoke screen. The congressional committees had been told, in

confidence, of the Russian failures long ago. They simply went along with the Administration's decision to release the information now.

The U. S. Information Agency began broadcasting reports on the Soviet failures over the Voice of America Thursday. It also relayed the story to newspapers all over the world via its wireless press network.

## 'World Should Know'

"We intend to pound this message home," a USIA spokesman said. "The world should know about Soviet failures as well as Soviet successes."

One high space official said he thought the decision to tell the world was long overdue.

"I hope it shows we're maturing," he said. "Our detection methods are fairly well known. They don't involve people inside the Soviet Union who could be hurt, so it seems safe enough to release it."

Another source said military men fought the announcement until the very last.

"It's so ridiculous," he said. "They didn't want to identify the country where the shot came from—as if it could be any place but Russia."

Officials declined to discuss U. S. detection methods. It is known, however, that the space agency and the Defense Department force maintain a world-wide missile tracking network.

The Air Force publicly brags

about the ability of its ballistic missile early warning system—huge radar screens in Alaska, Greenland and Britain—to detect Russian missile shots as soon as they rise over the horizon.

## Silence on 'Why'

The space agency also declined to talk about other possible Russian failures, such as the many rumors about unsuccessful attempts to put a man into orbit.

Space agency spokesmen refused to say why it is considered all right now to talk about Russian failures but not earlier.

Other sources indicated, however, that two factors were involved in the decision. One reason was that word of the next-to-last Russian failure, an attempt to shoot a rocket to Venus on Aug. 25, two days before our Mariner II, leaked out last week.

Pieces of the Russian missile were observed circling the earth by members of a civilian moonwatch team organized by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory.